

PD WEEKLY, AUGUST 10, 2017



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**PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR
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THE RACE QUESTION

Project Gutenberg's *The Heart Of Happy Hollow*, by Paul Laurence Dunbar

Scene--Race track. _Enter old coloured man, seating himself._

"Oomph, oomph. De work of de devil sho' do p'ospah. How 'do, suh? Des tol'able, thankee, suh. How you come on? Oh, I was des a-sayin' how de wo'k of de ol' boy do p'ospah. Doesn't I frequent the racetrack? No, suh; no, suh. I's Baptis' myse'f, an' I 'low hit's all devil's doin's. Wouldn't 'a' be'n hyeah to-day, but I got a boy named Jim dat's long gone in sin an' he gwine ride one dem hosses. Oomph, dat boy! I sut'ny has talked to him and labohed wid him night an' day, but it was allers in vain, an' I's feahed dat de day of his reckonin' is at han'.

"Ain't I nevah been intrusted in racin'? Humph, you don't s'pose I been dead all my life, does you? What you laffin' at? Oh, scuse me, scuse me, you unnerstan' what I means. You don' give a ol' man time to splain hisse'f. What I means is dat dey has been days when I walked in de counsels of de on-gawdly and set in de seats of sinnahs; and long erbout dem times I did tek most ovahly strong to racin'.

"How long dat been? Oh, dat's way long back, 'fo' I got religion, mo'n thuty years ago, dough I got to own I has fell from grace several times sense.

"Yes, suh, I ust to ride. Ki-yi! I nevah furgit de day dat my ol' Mas' Jack put me on 'June Boy,' his black geldin', an' say to me, 'Si,' says he, 'if you don' ride de tail offen Cunnel Scott's mare, "No Quit," I's gwine to larrup you twell you cain't set in de saddle no mo'.' Hyah, hyah. My ol' Mas' was a mighty han' fu' a joke. I knowed he wan't gwine to do nuffin' to me.

"Did I win? Why, whut you spec' I's doin' hyeah ef I hadn' winned? W'y, ef I'd 'a' let dat Scott maih beat my 'June Boy' I'd 'a' drowned myse'f in Bull Skin Crick.

"Yes, suh, I winned; w'y, at de finish I come down dat track lak hit was de Jedgment Day an' I was de las' one up! Ef I didn't race dat maih's tail clean off, I 'low I made hit do a lot o' switchin'. An' aftah dat my wife Mandy she ma'ed me. Hyah, hyah, I ain't bin much on hol'in' de reins sence.

"Sh! dey comin' in to wa'm up. Dat Jim, dat Jim, dat my boy; you nasty putrid little rascal. Des a hundred an' eight, suh, des a hundred an' eight. Yas, suh, dat's my Jim; I don't know whaih he gits his dev'ment at.

"What's de mattah wid dat boy? Whyn't he hunch hisse'f up on dat saddle

right? Jim, Jim, whyn't you limber up, boy; hunch yo'se'f up on dat hoss lak you belonged to him and knowed you was dah. What I done showed you? De black raskil, goin' out dah tryin' to disgrace his own daddy. Hyeah he come back. Dat's bettah, you scoun'ril.

"Dat's a right smaht-lookin' hoss he's a-ridin', but I ain't a-trustin' dat bay wid de white feet--dat is, not altogethah. She's a favourwright too; but dey's sumpin' else in dis worl' sides playin' favourwrights. Jim bettah had win dis race. His hoss ain't a five to one shot, but I spec's to go way fum hyeah wid money ernuff to mek a donation on de pa'sonage.

"Does I bet? Well, I don' des call hit bettin'; but I resks a little w'en I t'inks I kin he'p de cause. 'Tain't gamblin', o' co'se; I wouldn't gamble fu nothin', dough my ol' Mastah did ust to say dat a honest gamblah was ez good ez a hones' preachah an' mos' nigh ez skace.

"Look out dah, man, dey's off, dat nasty bay maih wid de white feet leadin' right fu'm 'de pos'. I knowed it! I knowed it! I had my eye on huh all de time. Oh, Jim, Jim, why didn't you git in bettah, way back dah fough? Dah go de gong! I knowed dat wasn't no staht. Troop back dah, you raskils, hyah, hyah.

"I wush dat boy wouldn't do so much jummying erroun' wid dat hoss. Fust t'ing he know he ain't gwine to know whaih he's at.

"Dah, dah dey go ag'in. Hit's a sho' t'ing dis time. Bettah, Jim, bettah. Dey didn't leave you dis time. Hug dat bay mare, hug her close, boy. Don't press dat hoss yit. He holdin' back a lot o' t'ings.

"He's gainin'! doggone my cats, he's gainin'! an' dat hoss o' his'n gwine des ez stiddy ez a rockin'-chair. Jim allus was a good boy.

"Confound these spec's, I cain't see 'em skacely; huh, you say dey's neck an' neck; now I see 'em! now I see 'em! and Jimmy's a-ridin' like----Huh, huh, I laik to said sumpin'.

"De bay maih's done huh bes', she's done huh bes'! Dey's turned into the stretch an' still see-sawin'. Let him out, Jimmy, let him out! Dat boy done th'owed de reins away. Come on, Jimmy, come on! He's leadin' by a nose. Come on, I tell you, you black rapsCALLION, come on! Give 'em hell, Jimmy! give 'em hell! Under de wire an' a len'th ahead. Doggone my cats! wake me up w'en dat othah hoss comes in.

"No, suh, I ain't gwine stay no longah, I don't app'ove o' racin', I's gwine 'roun' an' see dis hyeah bookmakah an' den I's gwine dreckly home, suh, dreckly home. I's Baptis' myse'f, an' I don't app'ove o' no sich doin's!"



METRIC FIGURE

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Al Que Quiere!*, by William Carlos Williams

There is a bird in the poplars!
It is the sun!
The leaves are little yellow fish
swimming in the river.
The bird skims above them,
day is on his wings.
Phœbus!
It is he that is making
the great gleam among the poplars!
It is his singing
outshines the noise
of leaves clashing in the wind.

THE SLEEPING FLOWERS

Project Gutenberg's *Poems: Three Series, Complete*, by Emily Dickinson

"Whose are the little beds," I asked,
"Which in the valleys lie?"
Some shook their heads, and others smiled,
And no one made reply.

"Perhaps they did not hear," I said;
"I will inquire again.
Whose are the beds, the tiny beds
So thick upon the plain?"

"'T is daisy in the shortest;
A little farther on,
Nearest the door to wake the first,
Little leontodon.

"'T is iris, sir, and aster,
Anemone and bell,
Batschia in the blanket red,
And chubby daffodil."

Meanwhile at many cradles
Her busy foot she plied,
Humming the quaintest lullaby
That ever rocked a child.

"Hush! Epigea wakens! --
The crocus stirs her lids,
Rhodora's cheek is crimson, --
She's dreaming of the woods."

Then, turning from them, reverent,
"Their bed-time 't is," she said;
"The bumble-bees will wake them
When April woods are red."

ENCOURAGEMENT

By Paul Laurence Dunbar, from The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Poems Teachers Ask For II*, by Various

Who dat knockin' at de do'?
Why, Ike Johnson--yes, fu' sho'!
Come in, Ike. I's mighty glad
You come down. I t'ought you's mad
At me 'bout de othah night,
An' was stayin' 'way fu' spite.
Say, now, was you mad fu' true
W'en I kin' o' laughed at you?
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

'Tain't no use a-lookin' sad,
An' a-mekin' out you's mad;
Ef you's gwine to be so glum,
Wondah why you evah come.
I don't lak nobody 'roun'
Dat jes' shet dey mouf an' frown--
Oh, now, man, don't act a dunce!
Cain't you talk? I tol' you once,
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

Wha'd you come hyeah fu' to-night?
Body'd t'ink yo' haid ain't right.
I's done all dat I kin do--
Dressed perticler, jes' fu' you;
Reckon I'd a' bettah wo'
My ol' ragged calico.
Aftah all de pains I's took,

Cain't you tell me how I look?
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

Bless my soul! I 'mos' fu'got
Tellin' you 'bout Tildy Scott.
Don't you know, come Thu'sday night,
She gwine ma'y Lucius White?
Miss Lize say I allus wuh
Heap sight laklier 'n huh;
An' she'll git me somep'n new,
Ef I wants to ma'y too.
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

I could ma'y in a week,
If de man I wants 'ud speak.
Tildy's presents 'll be fine,
But dey wouldn't ekal mine.
Him whut gits me fu' a wife
'll be proud, you bet yo' life.
I's had offers, some ain't quit;
But I hasn't ma'ied yit!
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

Ike, I loves you--yes, I does;
You's my choice, and allus was.
Laffin' at you ain't no harm--
Go 'way, dahky, whah's yo' arm?
Hug me closer--dah, da's right!
Wasn't you a awful sight,
Havin' me to baig you so?
Now ax whut you want to know--
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.



THE LIGHTNING-ROD MAN

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *The Piazza Tales*, by Herman Melville

What grand irregular thunder, thought I, standing on my hearth-stone
among the Acroceraunian hills, as the scattered bolts boomed overhead,

and crashed down among the valleys, every bolt followed by zigzag irradiations, and swift slants of sharp rain, which audibly rang, like a charge of spear-points, on my low shingled roof. I suppose, though, that the mountains hereabouts break and churn up the thunder, so that it is far more glorious here than on the plain. Hark!--someone at the door. Who is this that chooses a time of thunder for making calls? And why don't he, man-fashion, use the knocker, instead of making that doleful undertaker's clatter with his fist against the hollow panel? But let him in. Ah, here he comes. "Good day, sir:" an entire stranger. "Pray be seated." What is that strange-looking walking-stick he carries: "A fine thunder-storm, sir."

"Fine?--Awful!"

"You are wet. Stand here on the hearth before the fire."

"Not for worlds!"

The stranger still stood in the exact middle of the cottage, where he had first planted himself. His singularity impelled a closer scrutiny. A lean, gloomy figure. Hair dark and lank, mattedly streaked over his brow. His sunken pitfalls of eyes were ringed by indigo halos, and played with an innocuous sort of lightning: the gleam without the bolt. The whole man was dripping. He stood in a puddle on the bare oak floor: his strange walking-stick vertically resting at his side.

It was a polished copper rod, four feet long, lengthwise attached to a neat wooden staff, by insertion into two balls of greenish glass, ringed with copper bands. The metal rod terminated at the top tripodwise, in three keen tines, brightly gilt. He held the thing by the wooden part alone.

"Sir," said I, bowing politely, "have I the honor of a visit from that illustrious god, Jupiter Tonans? So stood he in the Greek statue of old, grasping the lightning-bolt. If you be he, or his viceroy, I have to thank you for this noble storm you have brewed among our mountains. Listen: That was a glorious peal. Ah, to a lover of the majestic, it is a good thing to have the Thunderer himself in one's cottage. The thunder grows finer for that. But pray be seated. This old rush-bottomed arm-chair, I grant, is a poor substitute for your evergreen throne on Olympus; but, condescend to be seated."

While I thus pleasantly spoke, the stranger eyed me, half in wonder, and half in a strange sort of horror; but did not move a foot.

"Do, sir, be seated; you need to be dried ere going forth again."

I planted the chair invitingly on the broad hearth, where a little fire

had been kindled that afternoon to dissipate the dampness, not the cold; for it was early in the month of September.

But without heeding my solicitation, and still standing in the middle of the floor, the stranger gazed at me portentously and spoke.

"Sir," said he, "excuse me; but instead of my accepting your invitation to be seated on the hearth there, I solemnly warn _you_, that you had best accept _mine_, and stand with me in the middle of the room. Good heavens!" he cried, starting--"there is another of those awful crashes. I warn you, sir, quit the hearth."

"Mr. Jupiter Tonans," said I, quietly rolling my body on the stone, "I stand very well here."

"Are you so horridly ignorant, then," he cried, "as not to know, that by far the most dangerous part of a house, during such a terrific tempest as this, is the fire-place?"

"Nay, I did not know that," involuntarily stepping upon the first board next to the stone.

The stranger now assumed such an unpleasant air of successful admonition, that--quite involuntarily again--I stepped back upon the hearth, and threw myself into the erectest, proudest posture I could command. But I said nothing.

"For Heaven's sake," he cried, with a strange mixture of alarm and intimidation--"for Heaven's sake, get off the hearth! Know you not, that the heated air and soot are conductors;--to say nothing of those immense iron fire-dogs? Quit the spot--I conjure--I command you."

"Mr. Jupiter Tonans, I am not accustomed to be commanded in my own house."

"Call me not by that pagan name. You are profane in this time of terror."

"Sir, will you be so good as to tell me your business? If you seek shelter from the storm, you are welcome, so long as you be civil; but if you come on business, open it forthwith. Who are you?"

"I am a dealer in lightning-rods," said the stranger, softening his tone; "my special business is--Merciful heaven! what a crash!--Have you ever been struck--your premises, I mean? No? It's best to be provided;--significantly rattling his metallic staff on the floor;--"by nature, there are no castles in thunder-storms; yet, say but the word, and of this cottage I can make a Gibraltar by a few waves of this wand.

Hark, what Himalayas of concussions!"

"You interrupted yourself; your special business you were about to speak of."

"My special business is to travel the country for orders for lightning-rods. This is my specimen-rod;" tapping his staff; "I have the best of references"--fumbling in his pockets. "In Criggan last month, I put up three-and-twenty rods on only five buildings."

"Let me see. Was it not at Criggan last week, about midnight on Saturday, that the steeple, the big elm, and the assembly-room cupola were struck? Any of your rods there?"

"Not on the tree and cupola, but the steeple."

"Of what use is your rod, then?"

"Of life-and-death use. But my workman was heedless. In fitting the rod at top to the steeple, he allowed a part of the metal to graze the tin sheeting. Hence the accident. Not my fault, but his. Hark!"

"Never mind. That clap burst quite loud enough to be heard without finger-pointing. Did you hear of the event at Montreal last year? A servant girl struck at her bed-side with a rosary in her hand; the beads being metal. Does your beat extend into the Canadas?"

"No. And I hear that there, iron rods only are in use. They should have _mine_, which are copper. Iron is easily fused. Then they draw out the rod so slender, that it has not body enough to conduct the full electric current. The metal melts; the building is destroyed. My copper rods never act so. Those Canadians are fools. Some of them knob the rod at the top, which risks a deadly explosion, instead of imperceptibly carrying down the current into the earth, as this sort of rod does. _Mine_ is the only true rod. Look at it. Only one dollar a foot."

"This abuse of your own calling in another might make one distrustful with respect to yourself."

"Hark! The thunder becomes less muttering. It is nearing us, and nearing the earth, too. Hark! One crammed crash! All the vibrations made one by nearness. Another flash. Hold!"

"What do you?" I said, seeing him now, instantaneously relinquishing his staff, lean intently forward towards the window, with his right fore and middle fingers on his left wrist. But ere the words had well escaped me, another exclamation escaped him.

"Crash! only three pulses--less than a third of a mile off--yonder, somewhere in that wood. I passed three stricken oaks there, ripped out new and glittering. The oak draws lightning more than other timber, having iron in solution in its sap. Your floor here seems oak.

"Heart-of-oak. From the peculiar time of your call upon me, I suppose you purposely select stormy weather for your journeys. When the thunder is roaring, you deem it an hour peculiarly favorable for producing impressions favorable to your trade."

"Hark!--Awful!"

"For one who would arm others with fear you seem unbeseemingly timorous yourself. Common men choose fair weather for their travels: you choose thunder-storms; and yet--"

"That I travel in thunder-storms, I grant; but not without particular precautions, such as only a lightning-rod man may know. Hark! Quick--look at my specimen rod. Only one dollar a foot."

"A very fine rod, I dare say. But what are these particular precautions of yours? Yet first let me close yonder shutters; the slanting rain is beating through the sash. I will bar up."

"Are you mad? Know you not that yon iron bar is a swift conductor? Desist."

"I will simply close the shutters, then, and call my boy to bring me a wooden bar. Pray, touch the bell-pull there.

"Are you frantic? That bell-wire might blast you. Never touch bell-wire in a thunder-storm, nor ring a bell of any sort."

"Nor those in belfries? Pray, will you tell me where and how one may be safe in a time like this? Is there any part of my house I may touch with hopes of my life?"

"There is; but not where you now stand. Come away from the wall. The current will sometimes run down a wall, and--a man being a better conductor than a wall--it would leave the wall and run into him. Swoop! _That_ must have fallen very nigh. That must have been globular lightning."

"Very probably. Tell me at once, which is, in your opinion, the safest part of this house?"

"This room, and this one spot in it where I stand. Come hither."

"The reasons first."

"Hark!--after the flash the gust--the sashes shiver--the house, the house!--Come hither to me!"

"The reasons, if you please."

"Come hither to me!"

"Thank you again, I think I will try my old stand--the hearth. And now, Mr. Lightning-rod-man, in the pauses of the thunder, be so good as to tell me your reasons for esteeming this one room of the house the safest, and your own one stand-point there the safest spot in it."

There was now a little cessation of the storm for a while. The Lightning-rod man seemed relieved, and replied:--

"Your house is a one-storied house, with an attic and a cellar; this room is between. Hence its comparative safety. Because lightning sometimes passes from the clouds to the earth, and sometimes from the earth to the clouds. Do you comprehend?--and I choose the middle of the room, because if the lightning should strike the house at all, it would come down the chimney or walls; so, obviously, the further you are from them, the better. Come hither to me, now."

"Presently. Something you just said, instead of alarming me, has strangely inspired confidence."

"What have I said?"

"You said that sometimes lightning flashes from the earth to the clouds."

"Aye, the returning-stroke, as it is called; when the earth, being overcharged with the fluid, flashes its surplus upward."

"The returning-stroke; that is, from earth to sky. Better and better. But come here on the hearth and dry yourself."

"I am better here, and better wet."

"How?"

"It is the safest thing you can do--Hark, again!--to get yourself thoroughly drenched in a thunder-storm. Wet clothes are better conductors than the body; and so, if the lightning strike, it might pass down the wet clothes without touching the body. The storm deepens again. Have you a rug in the house? Rugs are non-conductors. Get one,

that I may stand on it here, and you, too. The skies blacken--it is dusk at noon. Hark!--the rug, the rug!"

I gave him one; while the hooded mountains seemed closing and tumbling into the cottage.

"And now, since our being dumb will not help us," said I, resuming my place, "let me hear your precautions in traveling during thunder-storms."

"Wait till this one is passed."

"Nay, proceed with the precautions. You stand in the safest possible place according to your own account. Go on."

"Briefly, then. I avoid pine-trees, high houses, lonely barns, upland pastures, running water, flocks of cattle and sheep, a crowd of men. If I travel on foot--as to-day--I do not walk fast; if in my buggy, I touch not its back or sides; if on horseback, I dismount and lead the horse. But of all things, I avoid tall men."

"Do I dream? Man avoid man? and in danger-time, too."

"Tall men in a thunder-storm I avoid. Are you so grossly ignorant as not to know, that the height of a six-footer is sufficient to discharge an electric cloud upon him? Are not lonely Kentuckians, ploughing, smit in the unfinished furrow? Nay, if the six-footer stand by running water, the cloud will sometimes _select_ him as its conductor to that running water. Hark! Sure, yon black pinnacle is split. Yes, a man is a good conductor. The lightning goes through and through a man, but only peels a tree. But sir, you have kept me so long answering your questions, that I have not yet come to business. Will you order one of my rods? Look at this specimen one? See: it is of the best of copper. Copper's the best conductor. Your house is low; but being upon the mountains, that lowness does not one whit depress it. You mountaineers are most exposed. In mountainous countries the lightning-rod man should have most business. Look at the specimen, sir. One rod will answer for a house so small as this. Look over these recommendations. Only one rod, sir; cost, only twenty dollars. Hark! There go all the granite Taconics and Hoosics dashed together like pebbles. By the sound, that must have struck something. An elevation of five feet above the house, will protect twenty feet radius all about the rod. Only twenty dollars, sir--a dollar a foot. Hark!--Dreadful!--Will you order? Will you buy? Shall I put down your name? Think of being a heap of charred offal, like a haltered horse burnt in his stall; and all in one flash!"

"You pretended envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to and from Jupiter Tonans," laughed I; "you mere man who come here to put you

and your pipestem between clay and sky, do you think that because you can strike a bit of green light from the Leyden jar, that you can thoroughly avert the supernal bolt? Your rod rusts, or breaks, and where are you? Who has empowered you, you Tetzels, to peddle round your indulgences from divine ordinations? The hairs of our heads are numbered, and the days of our lives. In thunder as in sunshine, I stand at ease in the hands of my God. False negotiator, away! See, the scroll of the storm is rolled back; the house is unharmed; and in the blue heavens I read in the rainbow, that the Deity will not, of purpose, make war on man's earth."

"Impious wretch!" foamed the stranger, blackening in the face as the rainbow beamed, "I will publish your infidel notions."

The scowl grew blacker on his face; the indigo-circles enlarged round his eyes as the storm-rings round the midnight moon. He sprang upon me; his tri-forked thing at my heart.

I seized it; I snapped it; I dashed it; I trod it; and dragging the dark lightning-king out of my door, flung his elbowed, copper sceptre after him.

But spite of my treatment, and spite of my dissuasive talk of him to my neighbors, the Lightning-rod man still dwells in the land; still travels in storm-time, and drives a brave trade with the fears of man.



THE PROTECTOR

By Betsy Curtis

[Transcriber's Note: This Project Gutenberg
etext was produced from
Galaxy Science Fiction February 1951.
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*There's a fortune in a boxer who feels no pain.
This one didn't, except in odd ways....*

How come I live here on Gorlin permanent? Well, it's something like this.

There is nobody real surprised when some scientist writes an article in the Sunday supplement about the primitive tribes of Anestha dying out probably. The Anesthon natives is freaks, anyway, and folks just naturally figure they can't last long in stiff competition. If you are like them and your body don't feel any pain any time, you need a nursemaid around to keep you from doing dumb things, like walking in front of a truck or starving to death.

I am here on Gorlin a couple times and know about 'em. Some folks think it's comical to watch the space crews think up ways to give an Anesthon a workout. I see one Anesthon girl--a real looker she is, too--dance fourteen hours before she gives out, just for a bottle of perfume and one of them Venusian fur lounge robes. They sure enjoy their pleasures, even if they never feel no pain. You feeling any? More thiska?

Hey, Noor! Another round of thiska for the boys!

Well, they can feel your feelings, and any thoughts that are about them, too. I guess all they live for is pleasure and a pat on the back. One time a little runty Anesthon guy even builds a whole stone blockhouse for a first looie, when the looie thinks real hard that the little guy looks like a first-rate hod carrier. Time the house is built, the Anesthon's hands is all bloody and one ankle broke where a chunk of rock drops on him. He don't notice it, of course.

Pierre gets all worked up about them Anestha dying out. That's my boy Pierre, the heavyweight. I name him Pierre so's nobody thinks he is tough till afterward. He comes from Gorlin. Of course I have to stable him on Venus long enough for a legal residence, or the Boxing Commission would have him investigated and maybe banned from the ring as a telepath. Tough training him, too. He can't see the sense of fighting, but, man, he can stay in the ring all night. He never does get real speedy on his feet, but he learns fast and packs a wicked left. I don't have to lie when I am thinking real hard he is champeen material.

Anyhow, Pierre gets all worked up over his race getting extinct. He has a sister who is glenched to some nice boy and his old man is some sort of a chief. He is all for beating it back by the next via-Venus ship to see what is getting at the old folks at home. I calm him down though, give him a couple of shots of thiska and say I better take him around to see that scientist-dopester and get the inside first. I have to go everywhere with him to see he doesn't break a leg and forget to tell me about it.

* * * * *

So we hop a TAT in Chi and make for Washington where this science fellow is with some Smithsonian Institute. He is nice enough about seeing us, but he can't figure how a Chinaman like Pierre has any call to be steamed up about the Anestha (you seen these Anestha with their slick black hair and goldy skin and smooth eyelids like a Earth Chinaman) so I have to break down and tell him about Pierre being an Anesthon.

That scientist is pretty peeved with me bringing Pierre into the Earth system, but when I tell him Pierre wants to go back to help out the folks, he kind of clams up and says the article is just one of those Sunday paper things. There don't really seem to be anything wrong on Gorlin except that all the workers are getting more careless than usual, falling off walls they are building and getting hit by rocks during blasting, or walking in front of full cars in the mines.

Pierre gives the man a look. "Workers? Mines? Blasting?" he says. "What gives? There are no mines on Gorlin," he says, "just a few quarries and a lot of big farms. We never have to kill ourselves working. What gives?" he says.

"Oh," the man comes back, "there's a couple big targ mines in full swing. Some big Earth concern is shipping out the stuff five freighters a day to Mercury for mass insulation. All native workers. They don't get paid much--weej cigarettes, bubble bath, some thiska, electro-fur blankets, stuff like that--but I don't hear yapping. If I do, I report anything that looks like slavery." Of course he says it with a lot of grammar and it takes him a half hour, but that is the slant.

He wants to gab some then with Pierre. I see that the boy is getting jittery and homesick, too, when the guy starts raving about swimming in the flaff pools and the feeling of katweela petals under your bare feet, so I says we have to catch a plane and get out of there.

Pierre still wants to head for Gorlin. He says his people must be unhappy about something or they are more careful. Life on Gorlin is too much fun to just go and die for no reason.

I try to pep him up on the way back to Chi, talking about his next fight with Kid Bop, but he says he can't see any reason in fighting, either, just now. I tell him I think he kind of likes fighting, but he says what he likes is the nice things I think about him when he wins, and he is too worried about his family to pay much attention to what I think just now.

* * * *

Well, we are both pretty flush from one of the best fight seasons I ever see and a rest won't hurt the boy, so I say okay, we are going by the first liner off the Flats.

"You don't have to go, Joe," he says. "Keep your dough and train a couple more kids. I may not be back," he says.

"Look, boy," I says, "you know what the food is like on them liners," I says, kind of kidding, "and if there's nobody around to cram it down you, you don't eat, and if you don't eat, you starve--and if you starve, you are in no condition to cheer up your sister and your old man. Besides," I says, "I can afford a vacation and you're the only fighter I want to work with. You've got a real future," I says, "and I'm going to bring you back alive."

I guess that makes him feel kind of good, because he grins first time since he reads that paper and says, "All right, Joe, come on along."

* * * *

We buy a few pretties and neckties in the station and ship out of Chi for the Flats on the next TAT. Pierre wants to get some perfume for his sister, but I tell him we can get better on Venus, where all the good stuff is made.

The trip from Venus Space Base to Gorlin is fast on account of over-drive, but even so I have no trouble passing Pierre off as a fighter who has the jitters and is headed for a vacation where he learns to take it easy the easy way. He is always burning his fingers or his mouth on a cigarette, and I have to keep an eye on him all the time. Nerves, I explain to the passengers.

When we land, Pierre is all for hunting up his folks, but I says no, if there is some trouble, it is smarter to case the joint. We check in at the swanky tourist hotel. She is new since I am on Gorlin a couple years ago and what class! She is built around one of the biggest flaff pools on the whole planet and our room is completely lined with padded velvety stuff, sort of a deep red color, and the bathroom has a cloudrift shower that you nearly float away on.

But Pierre just doesn't relax. I keep trying to make him get in the shower, but it is no use. He says he is just too worried to take any pleasure in it. I don't think we ought to go scouting till night and that is thirty some hours yet, but when I see he is settling down to wear the fuzz right off the floor walking round and round, I give in, feed him a sandwich I bring from the ship, and we stroll off in the

woods like we are looking for flowers.

There are no signs around the hotel saying which way to the mines, so we set off to circle the hotel and spaceport clearing to look for the rail-line that brings the targ to the port. I figure we have gone about two-thirds of the way around when I nearly fall over a guy sitting on the ground with his head in his hands. What I think is katweela flowers is just the red Anesthon kloa he has on. He looks up sort of dull and then he sees Pierre with me. He lets out a yip and sits back hard on the ground and moans. Pierre yanks the fellow up on his feet and hugs him and starts to jabber away so fast I can't tell what he is saying. Foreigners always talk faster than anybody else. The other guy puts in a word or two every once in a while and then he scrams off through the trees.

"That's Noor," Pierre informs me, "the guy my sister Jennel is glenched to. He's gonna get us a couple of kloas so nobody'll notice us around the mine. He's feeling mighty low, but I can't figure out why. He says Jennel and the old man are okay, only he can't ever carry Jennel to his own house because he ain't man enough. I don't get it. He can make a good fighter, Joe."

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Before you can count three, Noor is back again with the kloas and Pierre strips and gets into his. I ain't too keen to show my shapelies, but Pierre starts grabbing my shirt and I have to put the kloa on or else. The boys head south at a good clip and I tag along trying to catch up and find out the score. When Pierre sees I am making like winded, he slows down and tells me we are going to the mine owner's fancy dump about two miles down the drag. Pierre says Noor tells him the mine owner doesn't like him and he has to leave us when we get in sight of the house.

After about a mile, Noor begins to drag along. Then he just sits down under another tree and says that is the end of the line for him. He points through the trees and says go on, maybe he is still there when we come back, maybe not. While Pierre is jawing with him, I look up the trail and see a Anesthon babe about a hundred feet away. You can tell it is a babe from one of them blue and green mollos draped around her over the kloa.

Noor sees her, too, and takes off like a bat back the way we come. Pierre jogs ahead and when I get up with him, there he is hugging and jabbering again.

"My sister Jennel," he says, and, "Jennel, this is Joe, my manager."

She is a cute trick with lots of yumph showing through the mollo. She stands kind of slumped, though, and a few of the flowers in her shiny black hair are pretty mashed.

"Smatter, Jennel?" I says. "You look kind of dragged out for a dame whose brother comes home practically a champeen. Katweela flowers go on strike?" I says, just trying to make talk.

She slumps a little more and says the boss don't like her and how it's too bad her brother has to come home and find her still alive and cluttering up the woods.

I tell Pierre she better take us to this boss that don't like a babe like her, but she just shakes her head and says go that way and we come to the house. Then she says the boss makes the natives use the employees' entrance on the other side of the house and she offers to take and show us the way. She kind of twitches when she says "natives."

She don't even says yes or no all the way to the gate till, just before we get there, I trip on a root and bang my knee on a rock on the way down. Well, I howl and cuss some and she comes up close and asks me what seems to be the matter. I tell her the blamed rock hurts my knee and I think real hard about how her knee would feel if a rock hits it and she busts right out crying.

"Oh, you poor man, you poor man, you," she sobs. "That rock don't like you at all."

"It don't hate me, either," I says. "It's only a rock."

"But it makes a hurt to you. It don't love you and now you are not happy where there's any rocks because they don't love you," she says, and she helps me up and starts dragging me along, still crying like crazy.

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I don't make nothing out of that, but pretty soon we come to a little gate in a thick row of bushes. Jennel lets go of me then and says she hopes Pierre is a strong man and a good worker and that the boss likes him. And then she gives a big sigh and says if the boss don't like him, we can find her over there where the men are cutting down a bunch of trees, because if one of the trees likes her, it will maybe fall on her pretty soon.

Pierre tells her to wait right there by the gate because he is coming back. He isn't looking for work so the boss won't care if he is strong or not. She just sighs again and sits down on the grass and whimpers.

Pierre tries once more to get her to tell him what is the matter, but all she says is that their father and some other fellow named Frith are up at the big house. They are being talked to by the boss about not getting out enough targ on the shifts where they are foremen, and she says how sad it is about Pierre coming home.

It is just beginning to filter through my thick skull that the boss is connected with all this dying out of the Anestha, as the Sunday paper puts it, and I grab Pierre away from Jennel and hustle him through the gate.

"Look, Pierre," I says, "we'll go around and listen by them long windows and see what cooks. I'll bet that boss is up to something dirty in there. If he is the one who messed up Jennel," I says, "we better just mess him up some."

There is nobody in sight on the lawn and we just march up to the window easy as pie. There is this big booming voice giving somebody what for.

"You poor miserable idiots," yells this voice, "you can't keep the workers off the tracks and you get out less than twenty tons of targ since last night, and then you waste a whole charge of nitro by not telling the watchman he's not supposed to smoke in the enclosure. All those people are dead and it's your fault."

I hear a sniffle behind me and when I turn around, there is Jennel. She has sneaked up behind us to see what we are going to do.

"That's how he talks to me, too," she lets us know in a whisper, "only he says I am not fit to even wash dishes, let alone ever have a house of my own ... when I drop one of his plates a little while ago. He says I am looking in a mirror instead of where I am going and he hopes I see what an ugly pan I have, because I ought to know it and keep out of people's way so they won't have to look at me." Her tears splash right down on the grass.

"And that's not all," the yelling inside goes on. "Not only do you kill off all my workers, but at this rate I'm losing money paying you four packs of cigarettes a day. If I have to blast off and start from scratch in some other part of this blamed universe, you stupid, gutless ... why, you aren't even men. You worms don't even run when you see a car coming at you. Too blamed dumb to come in out of the rain."

I stick my head around the corner and look in, and there is the back of a big guy in a Mercury-made suit and with a bald head that is red all the way round to the back of his neck. On the other side of the room I see a couple of the sorriest-looking Anestha God ever makes, shuffling

their feet and looking like kicked dogs.

I turn to Pierre. "Go in there swinging," I says, like at a fight, and pull the window open.

"He won't like me," Pierre says, hanging back. "He says Anestha are dumb cowards. Maybe he knows. Maybe I won't dare hit him."

"You get in there and poke him, boy," I says and give him a push. "I like you and I see you fight and the Anestha got more guts than anybody!"

* * * * *

The big guy hears us and turns around. "Get out of here, you mangy natives," he bellows. "You good for nothing, shivering, sniveling, cowardly boobs. I'm not ready for you yet." He is shaking a whippy-looking cane at me and Pierre, and I think he has turned purple.

"We're ready for you, though," I yell back. I climb into the room pulling Pierre in after me. "Pierre's no sniveling coward and you can quit talking to his brave, heroic, self-sacrificing father like that. Put 'em up and defend yourself, you howling ape," I yell, "because Pierre is going to give you the beating of your howling life!"

I see Pierre's old man and the other fellow spruce up some.

The big guy sits down in a chair real quick, and, sucking in a big breath, he starts going all fatherly at Pierre, telling him that he doesn't want to have to hit him back, because Pierre will not feel it when he kills him, which he doesn't want to have to do because Pierre is just a poor weak Anesthon who don't know from nothing, and he doesn't want to injure any of his workers and he is just telling Pierre's old man a few things to protect the Anestha.

Pierre looks at me kind of doubtful.

"Go on, hit the fat bully," I says, real icy. "He has it coming. You owe it to your old man and Noor and Jennel here. Go ahead and show him what kind of champeens the Anestha can turn out. It's just for his own good," I says, "so hit him now. Then you can tell your dad what a great guy you are."

Pierre's left obediently swings into the lug's jaw with a crack like a rifle. He don't even watch the big guy sag down on the floor. He begins hugging his father and the other fellow and grinning and jabbering away like blue blazes.

The big guy is still breathing, but out cold, so I go to look for a tele-viz. I figure the authorities better hear my story before the big guy wakes up.

After I make my spiel, the port chief says to come in and bring Pierre and his father and Frith and Jennel and Noor, too, if we can find him, and make an official recorded report. He is sending a doctor out by 'copter.

We beat it for the port, leaving the fat boss sleeping on the floor.

We all stay in protective custody at the hotel, swimming in flaff and lounging around the thiska bar for a couple of weeks, until the commission headed by that scientist from the Smithsonian Institute comes out and takes the boss back to Earth. He has to see a judge about why he should not go into stir for a while for psychological coercion or something like that.

Before they leave, the commission hands me an official charge at a hundred thou a year to stay as Protector of Morale to the Anestha. That is better than the fight racket, but the protectorship is a laugh. I can't even go out for a walk without a couple dozen Anestha tagging along, to keep me from stubbing my toe on some unfriendly pebble, or socking my eye on some unloving devil of a doorknob.



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